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Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 1st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 30 September 2010, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Rosenthal ..... (Guatemala)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Ms. McLurg

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Organization of work (A/C.5/65/1; A/C.5/65/L.1)

1. **The Chair** invited members to consider the proposed tentative and provisional programme of work of the Committee for the main part of the session. The tentative programme of work had been prepared on the basis of the list of agenda items allocated to the Committee by the General Assembly (A/C.5/65/1). The note on the status of preparedness of the relevant documentation for those items (A/C.5/65/L.1) did not reflect the reports issued or submitted since the date of its issuance. A separate list on the status of documentation would be issued for the first and second parts of the resumed session.

2. He wished to highlight some of the recommendations made by the General Committee in its first report (A/65/250) and adopted by the Assembly at its 2nd plenary meeting. The Fifth Committee should complete its work for the main part of the session by 10 December 2010. In view of financial constraints, meetings of the Main Committees, including informal meetings, should start promptly at 10 a.m. and be adjourned by 6 p.m. The General Assembly had also decided, in accordance with past practice, to waive the requirement that at least one quarter of the members of a Main Committee should be present in order to declare a meeting open and to permit debate to proceed.

3. Efforts should be made to reduce the number of resolutions adopted, and resolutions should not contain requests for reports from the Secretary-General unless such reports were strictly necessary for the implementation of those resolutions or for the continued consideration of an item. Resolutions should be short and action-oriented. In addition, the Main Committees should merely take note of the reports of the Secretary-General or of subsidiary bodies which did not require a decision by the Assembly and should neither debate nor adopt resolutions on them unless specifically requested to do so.

4. With regard to the programme budget, he drew attention to rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly on statements of programme budget implications and to paragraphs 12 and 13 of General Assembly decision 34/401 on the need to allow sufficient time for the Secretariat to prepare estimates of expenditure arising from draft resolutions and for the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee to consider such estimates. By that decision, the Assembly had requested the Fifth Committee, as a general practice, to consider accepting without debate the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on the financial implications of draft resolutions up to a prescribed limit of $25,000 on any one item. As noted in paragraph 37 of the report of the General Committee, in most cases more than 48 hours were required for the Secretary-General to review the programme budget implications of proposals before the Assembly. Accordingly, he urged delegations to convey to their colleagues in the other Main Committees the importance of ensuring timely consideration of and action on draft proposals with programme budget implications.

5. **Mr. Al-Shahari** (Yemen), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that, despite welcome improvement in the timely issuance of documents for the Committee, the goal of 90 per cent compliance had not yet been met. Documents must be issued in all six languages in accordance with the six-week rule; solutions should be explored to address the perennial problem of the late issuance of documents.

6. The Group commended the Bureau for preparing a balanced programme of work, which should be adjusted throughout the session in the light of the status of the Committee's deliberations. Negotiations should be open, inclusive and transparent, and should not be focused within small groups.

7. **Mr. Grauls** (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Croatia, Iceland and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; and, in addition, Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that the quality and timeliness of the Committee's decision-making depended on the timely issuance of the necessary documents in all official languages.

8. The European Union had long objected to a piecemeal approach to the budget process, which led to substantial increases in the approved budget. The programme budget adopted by the General Assembly for the period 2010-2011 had amounted to $5.156 billion, representing a 5.5 per cent increase compared to the budget for the previous biennium. He

understood that the Secretary-General would make new proposals under the regular budget that, if approved, would result in a total increase of over 12 per cent. The European Union would scrutinize each proposal in order to weigh the Organization's immediate needs against the imperatives of the current fiscal situation. While it would never prevent the United Nations from fulfilling its mandates, the European Union did wish to ensure that resources were used as efficiently as possible; accountability for expenditure was more imperative now than ever. It was also prepared to explore alternatives to the current recosting methodology in order to make the budget more transparent and predictable.

9. The preparation of the regular budget outline was a crucial step that allowed for the prioritizing of budget items and consideration of how to include all foreseeable expenditures in the outline for the biennium 2012-2013. Reform of the budget process was also essential: the Secretary-General should submit proposals that would lead to greater budgetary discipline, transparency and accountability. To that end, the European Union continued to support management reform, which would modernize the United Nations and allow the Secretariat to better manage its human and budgetary resources.

10. Noting that the Organization's greatest resource was its staff, he paid a tribute to those staff members who had lost their lives in the service of the United Nations in the previous year. He looked forward to considering reports that would continue the human resources reforms that had begun with the adoption of General Assembly resolution 63/250. Each proposal must be weighed in terms of its financial feasibility.

11. Effective financing of the Organization's activities was the shared responsibility of all Member States. The European Union would always uphold the need to spare vulnerable States from paying too large a share of the Organization's expenditure. Those States that could afford to do so should, however, make a larger contribution. There was no reason why the apportionment of costs should not reflect economic reality more accurately. The European Union hoped to discuss ways to enhance the current methodology for determining the scale of assessments, an issue that the Assembly had explicitly mentioned in its resolution 64/248.

12. **Mr. Errázuriz** (Chile), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, expressed the hope that the budget outline for the biennium 2012-2013 would be submitted as early as possible.

13. With respect to the capital master plan, the Group was concerned by the shortcomings in the electronic voting system, both in the conference rooms in the temporary North Lawn Building and in the General Assembly Hall. The problems had required the use of roll-call votes, which caused unnecessary delays, uncertainty as to the recording of votes and lack of transparency in the voting process. The Secretariat should seek an immediate solution.

14. The Group would examine the plans for the common areas in the Headquarters complex, which should reflect the historical and cultural richness of the Organization's entire membership. The Group's member States, which were making great efforts to pay their assessments for the capital master plan, were considering proposing that one of the common areas should be dedicated to the independence process in Latin America and the Caribbean.

15. The Group welcomed the Secretariat's efforts to ensure the speedy revival of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), which it deemed a priority. The Mission should be given the resources necessary to implement its mandate fully.

16. The Group also welcomed the establishment of UN Women, which would begin operating in January 2011. The Committee would carefully review its proposed regular budget to ensure the optimal use of resources and achieve better synergy and coordination in gender mainstreaming across the Organization. Ms. Michelle Bachelet, the former president of Chile who had been appointed head of UN Women, would perform admirably her duties of defending and promoting women's rights.

17. Given that most of the potential increase in the regular budget for the period 2010-2011 was attributable to special political missions, the Committee should reflect seriously on alternative ways of financing such missions. Governments were imposing severe restrictions on national budgets during the current financial crisis; the Secretary-General should take that fact into consideration when submitting proposals that did not respond to mandates approved by the Member States.

18. The Group called upon all Member States to make full and timely payment of their assessed contributions and condemned any unilateral measure taken against any Member State that rendered difficult the payment of its contributions.

19. **Mr. Sugiura** (Japan) said that it was regrettable that not all the documents to be considered by the Committee had been issued well in advance of the start of the session. The Secretariat should make every effort to provide sufficient information — including on the budgetary implications of proposals — in a timely manner.

20. His delegation would closely consider the reports on administration of justice, procurement, internal oversight services, information and communications technology and enterprise resource planning in order to judge whether the current system and new initiatives would serve the long-term interests of the Organization and its Member States.

21. While the Secretary-General had made a welcome effort to refrain from submitting add-ons to the approved budget, the Member States would once again be asked to consider a substantial number of additional proposals. His delegation would scrutinize those requests in order to keep any additional expenses to a minimum.

22. **Mr. Sial** (Pakistan), noting that the Secretariat's efforts to improve the timely issuance of documents for the Fifth Committee had resulted in a compliance rate of 59 per cent during the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly, expressed the hope that further improvements during the current session would help to achieve the goal of 90 per cent compliance. The Secretariat should also comply with the Assembly's request that summaries, conclusions and recommendations should appear in bold print.

23. His delegation discouraged the recent practice whereby Committee members established artificial linkages between agenda items, which hampered deliberations and delayed decision-making to the last minute. Proposals should instead be considered on their merits.

24. In the interests of the frugal use of resources, requests by Committee members for additional information to be provided in writing should be limited to essential matters.

25. **The Chair** said that he took it that the Committee approved the proposed tentative and provisional programme of work on the understanding that the Bureau would take into account the views expressed and make the necessary adjustments.

26. *It was so decided.*

27. **The Chair** suggested that a deadline of 15 October should be set for the submission of candidacies for appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary bodies and other appointments and that the elections should be held on 5 November. He took it that the Committee had no objection to the suggestion.

28. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.